

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD”**NO. 1987****A SERMON****DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1887,****BY C. H. SPURGEON,****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and said,
Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”
John 1:29.*

JOHN the Baptist’s one business was to bear witness to Christ. He was the morning star which heralds the rising sun. When the sun appeared he had no more reason for shining. You cannot account for John except by Jesus—the one reason for John’s existence is Jesus. I wish it might be so with us, may we be able to say, “For me to live is Christ.” May our life be such that it cannot be understood apart from Jesus—take Him away and our whole character would become an inexplicable mystery.

I am afraid that some professors could be easily interpreted apart from Christ, perhaps could be better accounted for if there were no Christ, but if we are like John, true witnesses to Jesus, we shall find in Jesus the conscious purpose of our being, and His glory will be the clue to all the windings of our lives. For this purpose were we born, and for this end have we come into the world, that we may bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Search and look my brethren, whether it has been so with you.

When our Lord was thus set forth by John, it is well to note the special character under which He was declared. John knew much of the Lord Jesus, and could have pictured Him in many lights and characters. He might especially have pointed Him out as the great moral example, the founder of a higher form of life, the great teacher of holiness and love, yet this did not strike the Baptist as the head and front of our Lord’s character, but *he proclaimed Him as one who had come into the world to be the great sacrifice for sin.*

Lifting up his hand and pointing to Jesus, he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” He did not say, “Behold the great Exemplar,” no doubt he would have said that in due season. He did not even say, “Behold the king and leader of a new dispensation,” that fact he would by no means have denied, but would have gloried in it. Still, the first point that he dwells upon, and that which wins his enthusiasm is, “Behold the Lamb of God.” John the Baptist views Him as the propitiation for sin, and so he cries, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

My brethren, we may depend upon it that this must be a very practical truth, for John was pre-eminently practical. What is the sum and substance of his teaching but, “Repent. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The axe is laid unto the root of the trees”? He has a word for everybody that comes, even the Roman soldiers are told to be content with their rations. John is no theorist or quibbler about dogma—he deals with life and character, and demands works meet for repentance, yet he makes a great point of our Lord’s being the sacrifice for sin. This indeed is the text of his life-sermon.

Rest assured that there is something wonderfully practical about that truth and those who becloud it under the notion of being practical are laying aside the best instrument of doing good to men. For the reformation of manners and the overthrow of evil, and the setting up of the kingdom of righteousness throughout the world, there is no truth like that which reveals Jesus as the sacrifice provided by God for removing the sin of men.

The stern Baptist, the true Elijah, who grappled hard with sin, and laid the sword of repentance to its throat, saw that nothing could be done unless he pointed out the Lamb of God, by whom the world’s sin

is taken away. When repentance is the sermon, Jesus must be the text and the substance of the discourse. He puts life, power, energy into what else would be a dead moral essay.

O you, who would save men from sin, take care that you preach the great sacrifice for sin. It is clear that this doctrine has to do with repentance, for the apostle of repentance introduced it. He whose first word was “Repent,” brought forward Jesus as the great Sin-Bearer, for he saw what I wish all would see, that there is a very intimate connection between the creation, growth, and purity of repentance and the sin-bearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, the fact is, the more we have to do with penitent sinners, the more we feel the need of a sin-bearer. O you that have never sinned, and are wrapped up in your own self-righteousness, you imagine that you can enter heaven by your own works. The bearing of sin by the Lamb of God does not seem to you at all needful, but if you once dwelt, as John did, in the midst of a burdened people, who came lamenting and confessing their sins, you would feel that nothing could bring them into reconciliation with God but faith in the appointed atonement. “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” is the text which evangelists love, because without it they cannot face the troubled ones who throng around them.

My brethren, in proportion as you wisely love your fellow men you will prize the sacrifice for sin. Your practical dealing with a perishing people will make you prize the Savior. Oh, what should I do if I were sent to preach to this vast throng, and had no sin-offering to declare to you! Might I not break my heart before a task so useless, so cruel, as to have to denounce sin and yet to have no pardon to declare, and consequently no hope? Now that I can tell of One who bore in His own body on the tree the transgression, iniquity, and sin of men, I find my task a solemn one, but certainly not hopeless, nor even dreary. Happy indeed am I to be permitted to set forth so blessed a salvation. Blessed are the lips which are allowed to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” You see, then, that the practical character of John’s mission made him all the more at home in setting forth the sacrificial character of our Lord.

If John the Baptist had not felt that the character of our Lord, as a sin-offering, was the chief matter, he might have fitly pointed Him out as an example at the time when he delivered the words of our text. The Savior had not yet revealed to anyone the fact and meaning of His future death. His Passion was as yet a thing in the dim future, while His life was just blossoming out into public observation. He had newly left the holy quiet of the parental roof at Nazareth, and the charm of early holiness was on Him. Should not the world now mark Him, that His example might be known throughout its entire length?

In His retirement His conduct had been such, that the austere and devout Baptist had noticed it, and had felt bound to acknowledge that his younger relative was a worthier person than himself, saying, “I have need to be baptized of you.” But John does not seem, when he beholds the Lord after His baptism, to think of His godly life already commenced, nor of that holy life which he could foresee in Him, but he fastens his eye upon the sacrificial character of that wondrous personage, and dwells on that alone, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

Brethren, that age needed an example as badly as ours does, but it needed a Savior still more, and John sees first that which is first. Let me add that the time was doubly opportune for dwelling upon our Lord’s example, since He had just returned from His famous temptation in the wilderness, wherein He had rehearsed His life-struggles. You cannot, in reading the narrative, piece in the forty days’ temptation in the wilderness anywhere else but just here. We read that our Savior, after His baptism, was led up immediately into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Tempted He was, but He yielded in no point.

In the threefold battle He vanquished the power of darkness at every point, and now, armed for the fray, in mail which He had tried and proven, the champion stood before John, and it would not have been singular had the man of God cried out, “Behold the perfect One, in whom the prince of this world has no place. Copy His supreme example.” But no, the great Baptist’s eye rests not on that—the blood and wounds of the passion are before his mind’s eye, and beyond all else he sees the sacrificial character

of the wondrous Being who now stands in the midst of the throng. The fact that He is the appointed victim for human sin enwraps the whole soul of the preacher, and he cries, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

Brethren, I desire to be in the same case with John the Baptist. I would have my thoughts of Christ concentrated upon His atoning death, henceforth and evermore. During the little time in which I may be spared to lift up my voice in this wilderness, I would bear witness to the Lamb of God. The years may be short in which I may guide this flock, but around the cross shall be to me forevermore the place of green pastures, and from the sacrifice of our Lord shall flow the still waters.

Many others are dealing with other aspects of our Lord’s work. Some, I doubt not, faithfully, and others with evil intent. I may very well leave them to do their best or their worst, for at least one may be allowed to be baptized for the Crucified, separated unto the cross, dedicated to the atonement by blood. I know no atonement but substitution, no substitute but Christ. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” To the declaration of that fact I set myself apart to life’s end.

I. To come still closer to our text, I would have you notice, in the first place, that JOHN SET FORTH CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE WITH EVIDENT PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF THE FACT.

When a man says, “Behold!” he sees something himself, He sees that something with clearness, and he desires you to see it, and therefore he cries, “Behold! Behold!” John had from his birth been ordained to be the herald of the Christ, but he evidently did not know who the Lamb of God might be. As a babe he leaped in the womb when he came near to the mother of our Lord, but yet he did not know Jesus as the Lamb of God. He says, “I knew Him not.”

Some suppose that John and Jesus had never met during their early years, but I find it hard to believe. I see quite another meaning here. John knew Jesus, but did not know Him as the Sin-Bearer. I think he must have known the life of the holy child, his near relative, while He grew in favor both with God and man, but he had not yet seen upon Him the attesting seal which marked Him as the Son of God.

John admired the Lord’s character very much, insomuch that when He came to be baptized by him, John said, “I have need to be baptized of You.” Yet John says, “I knew him not.” He knew Him as one of high and holy character, but as yet he saw not the token which the Lord God had secretly given to his servant, for he saw not the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Him. John shrewdly suspected that Jesus was the Son of the Highest, of whom he was the forerunner, but a witness must not follow his own surmises, however correct they may be.

John, as the Lord’s servant, did not dare to know anything of his own unguided judgement—he waited for the secret sign. Certain preachers tell their people anything they invent out of their wonderful brains, but the true servant of God has no business to put forth his own thoughts or opinions, but he must wait for a word from God. The message should come straight from the Master, “Thus says the Lord.” John, though he saw about this wondrous Jesus such marvelous traits of character that he was sure He was much greater than himself, yet says, “I knew him not.” He would know nothing but as it was revealed to him by the Lord God who sent him.

But when at last he received that personal token, when he plunged our blessed Master into the waters of the Jordan, and saw the heavens opened and the Dove descend, and heard the voice saying, “This is my beloved Son,” then he knew Him, and was henceforth sure. When he afterwards spoke he did not say, “I think this is the Lamb of God,” or, “I am under the impression that this is the Son of God.” No, he boldly cried, “Behold Him! See for yourselves. This is the Lamb of God! I speak with the accent of conviction—nothing can shake me. The Master has given the sign, and henceforth I bear confident witness. Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

Henceforth to John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ was more than He appeared to be to any others. To those who looked at the Savior, He would have seemed to be a plain, humble Jew, with nothing particular to mark Him out, except it were the gentleness of His demeanor, and a certain heavenliness of carriage, but to the Baptist He was now before all, and above all.

When a person was to be baptized, he confessed his sins to John, but when Jesus came with no sins of His own to confess, *did He whisper in John's ear, “I bear the sin of the world”?* I think He did, but in any case, this was true to the Baptist's mind, and to him Jesus was henceforth the matchless sacrifice, the one atonement for human sin.

This was an extraordinary truth to John. It took a miracle of grace to make a Jew see, “The Lamb, which takes away the sin *of the world*.” The Jew thought that the sacrifice of God must be for His chosen people only, but John saw beyond all bounds of nationality and restrictions of race, and clearly perceived in Jesus “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

Remember that John was of priestly race, he was familiar with lambs for sacrifice. But as a priest he never saw a lamb for sacrifice in a place far off from the consecrated shrine. There was only one altar, and that was at Jerusalem, and there the lamb of sacrifice must be, and not by Jordan's lonely stream. Yet John saw, in a place never dedicated in any peculiar manner to the service of God, the one great sacrifice standing in the midst of the people. “Behold,” he says, “this is the Lamb of God.” See how well the Lord had taught him, and how fully he had broken away from natural prejudices!

Beloved, I pray that each one of us may know for himself Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. You were brought up as children to believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but all revelation in the Book must again be revealed to the heart, or it will not be really known and perceived. For the life of the truth to enter into our life it must become a matter, not of head-creed only, but of heart-belief. That Jesus is the substitutionary sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins, the expiation for our iniquity, must be taught us by the Holy Ghost.

I can truly declare among you that I do not preach this doctrine of vicarious sacrifice as one among many theories, but as the saving fact of my experience. I must preach this or nothing. I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, because I have neither hope nor comfort outside of the great atoning sacrifice. He was made sin for us, even He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. “He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.”

I pray that each one of God's people may have a clear knowledge of Christ as the sin-bearing Lamb, and have it written on his individual consciousness, for then nothing will shake him out of it. When men find their own deliverance from sin, and their own peace with God flowing out of the atoning sacrifice, this great truth becomes a part of their inward experience, and it can never be torn from them.

O my brother, when the great sacrifice has saved you, you will never be able to doubt it. You will sooner doubt your own existence than doubt this blessed fact, that He bare our sin in His own body on the tree, and that through Him we are reconciled unto God. It was a matter with John of personal perception.

II. Let us advance a little. JOHN SET FORTH OUR LORD AS EMPHATICALLY THE SACRIFICE, “Behold *the* Lamb of God.”

This is more than John would have said of all the lambs that he had ever heard or read of since the first appointment of sacrifice. He remembered the firstling of the flock which Abel offered, and the sacrifice of a sweet savor which Noah presented. He knew the sacrifices of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was familiar with the lamb of the Paschal supper, and those of Israel's high festivals. He remembered the thousands of offerings that had been presented by David and by Solomon, and by other kings in the great national acts of worship, but passing them all by as if they were all mere shadows, he points his finger to the man Christ Jesus, and he says of Him, “This is THE Lamb of God.”

In this I think the Baptist comprehended everything that went before. There was *the daily lamb* of which I read to you in the commencement of the service, from Exodus 29. There had been slain before the Lord a lamb every morning, and a lamb every evening, all the year round throughout the centuries of Israel's history. Always and ever the continual sacrifice of the lamb was the symbol of JEHOVAH's dwelling with His people. But John puts his finger down upon a single sacrifice, and says, “This is *the* Lamb.” All the other daily lambs had been but prefigurations of this. “Behold THE Lamb.”

Let me also call your attention to another wonderful lamb, *the Paschal lamb*, slain on the night when Israel went up out of Egypt, when each Hebrew smeared the lintel and side-posts of his door with blood, and the sight of that blood sufficed for the deliverance of the family, according to the word of JEHOVAH, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” These Passover lambs were many and sacred to every Jewish mind, but John passes them all over, and says, “Behold *the* Lamb of God.”

Do you not think he also had in his mind *the lamb spoken of by Isaiah*, the great evangelical prophet? Had he not in his memory that famous passage, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter”? John the Baptist cries, “This is he of whom the prophet spake, Behold the Lamb of God.”

Ay, and if John’s eyes had been turned to the future as well as to the past, so that he could have looked down the centuries, and shared the visions of the seer of Patmos, he would have seen *the Lamb in the midst of the throne*, and have heard the song unto Him that was slain, but after seeing all the visions of the coming glory of the Lamb, he would still have kept his finger pointed towards the blessed Christ of God standing among the people, and would have said, “Behold *the* Lamb.”

All that you read of sacrifice and sin-bearing in the Old or the New Testament, all that you have ever heard, or ever shall hear, of the putting away of sin, if it be true, is all centered in this line, “Behold the Lamb.” It is a great thing when we can focus our testimony upon a single point. Let every servant of God do so, and bear his witness that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved. There is no other purgation for sin in the whole universe save that great sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world.

III. We will go a step further again, JOHN, IN DESCRIBING OUR LORD JESUS IN HIS SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER, WAS VERY EXPLICIT IN DECLARING HIM TO BE THE SACRIFICE OF GOD. He says: “Behold the Lamb of God.”

These words contain a great depth of meaning. “The Lamb of God.” Did not the Baptist thus recall the day when Abraham walked with Isaac towards the mount that God had told him of? “And Isaac said to his father, My father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham answered, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering.” John, standing centuries after, seems to say, “Now is the saying of the Father of the faithful fulfilled. Behold how God provides! Behold the Lamb of God.”

Under the old Jewish dispensation, if a man sinned, he said to himself, “I must go and find a lamb,” and he went out to his own flock, or else to his neighbor, and he bought a lamb. That was his lamb which he brought for his own trespass. But you and I have not to go and find a lamb. God has provided a lamb already, and we have only to accept the Lamb of God. And is it not a wonderful thing, that He against whom all sin was leveled, Himself provided the sacrifice for sin? Behold the sin *of man* and the Lamb *of God*.

Jesus is the Father’s best beloved, His choice one, His only one, and yet He delivered Him up for us all, and God’s Son became God’s Lamb. O my Father, my Father, do I sin, and do You find the sacrifice? But if a sacrifice must be found by the Father, why was it found so near His heart? He could find the sacrifice for sin nowhere but in His own bosom. He had but one Son, His Only-begotten, and “God so loved the world, that he gave His Only-begotten Son.” JEHOVAH gave His only Son to be a sacrifice! Let heaven and earth be filled with astonishment.

Beloved, if you think of it, who else could have provided a sacrifice for the sin of the world? None will pretend to such ability. And when God Himself provided a sacrifice, what other could He have found but His co-equal Son? Who else could render the honor which was due to the broken law? Who else could offer to divine justice the vindication which it demanded? Justice must be violated, or else man must perish forever. There remained no way of escape from this dilemma until the Son of the Highest condescended to become a sacrifice, and put away sin by His own death. So, you see, the Lord must Himself provide the sacrifice, and that sacrifice must be His Only-begotten Son.

I do not think I can preach more, for a faintness has come over me, nor is there need for more if you will but chew the cud of this one precious truth—Jesus is the Lamb which God provided, and He is the Lamb which God Himself presented at the altar. Yet I must rouse myself to say a little more.

Who was it that sacrificed the Lamb of God? Who was the priest on that dread day? Who was it that bruised Him? Who put Him to grief? Who caused Him the direst pang of all when He cried, “Why have you forsaken me?” Was it not the Father Himself? This was one point in the hardness of Abraham’s test—“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a sacrifice.” He must himself officiate at the sacrifice.

This the great Father did! He is the Lamb, the Lamb of God. And now today the bright side of this truth remains. He is the Lamb that God always accepts, must accept, glories to accept. Bring you but Jesus with you, and you have brought God an acceptable sacrifice. You cannot fail to be forgiven, when you come pleading the name of Jesus.

If you should bring the fattest of your flock, and the choicest of your herd, you might hear God say, “I will not accept your sacrifice”! But when you bring God’s own sacrifice, He cannot reject you. You are accepted in the Beloved. There is such acceptance of Christ with God that it overlaps your unacceptableness, it covers your sin, it covers *you*, it makes you to be dear to the heart of God.

Thus far have we come with this blessed text, even unto “waters to swim in.” “Behold the Lamb of God.”

IV. Lend me your ears a little longer while in the fourth place I show you that JOHN SET FORTH THIS BLESSED SAVIOR AS BEARING AND BEARING AWAY OUR SIN.

You that have the Revised Version will please notice that the Revisers follow the Authorized Version in the body of the translation, and say, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world,” but they have done wisely by putting in the margin, “bears the sin.” Both meanings are here. In order to the bearing away of sin, there must first be the bearing of it. The Lord Jesus both took sin and took it away.

Dwell for a minute on the first fact that sin was actually laid on Christ. I saw the other day, amongst the abominations of the Stygian Bog, across which I have been compelled to gaze of late, such a foul teaching as this—that the transference of sin is immoral. Yet is not Scripture full of it? “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Sin was borne by Christ, yes, actually borne by Him, “He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” They may make what they like of it. I am not going to explain or apologize, but I say without hesitation that the sin of the world was laid upon Christ, and He bore it, and bore it away.

The heaviest thing in the universe is sin, the earth has been known to open beneath the unbearable load of it. Neither angels nor men can stand under the load of sin. It sinks them lower than the lowest hell. When sin was laid upon the Lamb of God, He bore it, but He sweat as it were great drops of blood, and He was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. To have borne up *the weight* of the world would have been nothing compared with bearing *the sin* of the world.

The best of all is, however, that our Lord did not only bear the load, but He took it away. “He takes away the sin of the world.” The sin which was laid upon Christ did not remain there, He took it away—it remains no more. We read in Scripture many things about sin, as that God forgives it, blots it out, forgets it, casts it into the sea, puts it behind His back, and a great many other expressive figures, but this is in some respects the best of them—He takes it away. Blessed be His name.

My hearer, if you believe in Jesus you need not ask, “Where is my sin?” Jesus took it away. By bearing it He bore it away. It is gone, gone forever—it is utterly abolished. “The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for, and they shall not be found; yea they shall not be, says the LORD.” Our glory is that by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross sin was made an end of. He finished transgressions, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This is a Gospel worth believing, worth living for, worth dying for. Let all teaching be accursed that comes in opposition to it.

This is heaven to a soul whose sins are dragging it down to hell. Sin can be forgiven, for Jesus is “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” What a sight is this to see! Those eyes can never be sore again that have once seen sin put away by Jesus.

V. I must, however, call your attention to another point, which is that JOHN REPRESENTS OUR LORD AS REMOVING SIN CONTINUALLY. “Behold the Lamb of God which *takes* away the sin of the world.”

Behold the sin of the world as one huge mass, and Jesus deals with it as a whole, and takes it away. John does not speak in the past tense, nor in the future, but He speaks in the present—“He *takes away* the sin of the world.” Our Savior’s atoning sacrifice, though it was but once offered, is perpetual in its effect. He must die at a certain point of time, and there were reasons why His death should have taken place at the particular moment when it did, yet time does not enter into the essence of it. The sacrifice might have been offered a million years ago, and as the Lamb of God He would still take away sin or the actual sacrifice might further have been postponed, if infinite wisdom had so chosen, and yet the Lamb of God would now have taken away sin. The date of His death is not the question, His sacrifice is effectual before and after the event.

Our Savior was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, in the purpose, and covenant, and thought of God. His sacrifice saved Adam, and Noah, and Moses, and David, and all the saints, before the name of Calvary had become illustrious. Before He died He stood before John the Baptist, as taking away the sin of the world, and now today, though His death is a matter of 1800 years ago, He still “takes away the sin of the world.” In His person He was ever the Sin-Bearer, and through His death He puts sin away forever. By one sacrifice He has forever put away sin. His eternal merits forever remain a sweet savor unto the Lord God, and forever remove the foul offense of human transgression. As the Great Purifier He continually takes away and will continue to take away the sin of the world.

Blessed be God, I have a Savior today as fresh and full of power as if He had been crucified this very morning for my sin. He is now as able to save me as if He were at this hour on the cross. Those dear wounds of His in effect perpetually bleed. In His case the print of the nails is the token of an inexhaustible fountain of merit, which is always flowing forth for the removal of my guilt, eternally efficacious, ceaselessly sin-cleansing. This is where we rest.

It is the grandest fact in the history of all ages that Jesus takes away the sin of the world. We do not know what happened before this solar system was created, and we do not need to know. We cannot prophesy what is going to happen when yon sun and moon and stars shall disappear like transient sparks from the anvil of power, but there never will be any new fact which can equal this first of truths—that the Son of God assumed human nature, and in that nature bare sin and bare it away. This is the truth to be looked at beyond all others, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

Although I am too weak to preach to you as I desire, I feel great joy for myself in looking to the Sin-Bearer who has taken away my sin. How I wish that all of you felt the same! This is the pith and the marrow of my theology. But you must take the Lamb of God for yourselves. You must know Him for yourselves, you must believe in Him for yourselves, and He will surely take away that sin which now burdens you. He will take it right away, so that it shall never burden you again. He will blot it out. It shall cease to be. You shall be no more under condemnation, but shall be free from it forever. God help you to know Jesus, of whom I speak to you!

VI. The last point is this—JOHN WITNESSED TO THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE, “Which takes away the sin of the world.” No other in all the world can take away sin but the Lamb of God.

There is no sin which He cannot take away. There is no limit to the value of His great sacrifice; He takes away the sin of the world. There is no other sin-bearer, no other atonement, no other satisfaction. No purgatory in the present or in the future can avail to take away sin. No supposed remedial pains in hell are possible, neither lapse of years, nor bitterness of regret, can take away sin. Jesus takes away the sin of the world, and beside Him there is no other.

Mark you, “He takes away the sin of *the world*”—all manner of sin that was ever done in the world, by all sorts of men, of all races, in all places. He removes sins of long duration, of aggravated criminality, of crying heinousness—any sin that can be compassed within the bounds of the world, Christ takes away.

O repenting sinner, though your sins should be as many as the hairs of your head, and each one as black as the midnight of Tophet, yet Christ takes away each sin. Though you should have cursed God and slain your fellow men, yet such sin as this comes within the range of “the sin of the world.” Even as another text puts it, “God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” so is this text to be understood! Jesus so takes away the sin of the world that whosoever believes in Him shall no longer be guilty of sin, but shall be forgiven, and be justified before God.

Do you hear this? There is nothing in this text to shut any man out of mercy. Behold, I set before you an open door. There is everything in my text to induce every one of you who is conscious of guilt to come to the Lord Jesus, and accept Him as your substitute and sacrifice. Christ shall take away no man’s sin that does not believe in Him. Christ has so taken away sin that whosoever believes in Him shall live. If you will come now and lay your hand on this divine sacrifice you shall find it all-sufficient, whatsoever the nature of your guilt may be. O delightful Gospel! How sweet to preach it!

I have done when I have said this. John the Baptist appears to me to have relieved his mind by the utterance of my text. He was full of weariness because of the scribes and Pharisees, doctors, and doubters who had been warring around him. He had been put upon his defense, and had been harried with innumerable questions. First one and then another, this question and that question, and now John ends the wordy duel by pointing to one whose presence was joy to his heart.

There stands the Savior, and John stops his argument, and cries, “There He is! Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” It is to me a supreme joy to turn aside from those who becloud the everlasting Gospel, to leap out of the midst of controversy, and to cry to you with exultation—Jesus is the Son of God, He is the sacrifice for sin, He takes it away. Believe on Him and live. There is more joy in one sermon than in years of disputation. Oh, that everyone in this congregation might believe in Jesus and live! What a refreshment it is to the preacher’s mind to get to his message at last, to get away from the bamboozlement of those who confound plain truth, and to come to matter-of-fact dealing with eternal salvation. There, let them question and quibble—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin.

With what certainty the Baptist speaks! He does not for a moment hesitate, or speak with cautious reserve. No debate disturbs the foundation of his confidence. Before his eyes he evidently sees the Sin-Bearer, and he bids others see Him as he sees Him. To him no doubt remains, for he had seen the heavens opened above the head of Jesus, and he had heard the voice of God Himself, saying, “This is my beloved Son.”

Dear friends, the marks which prove our Lord Jesus to be the vicarious sacrifice for sin are as clear to me as ever they were to John the Baptist. I dogmatize, because I feel more than sure as to my Lord’s being the great sacrifice for sin. I could not doubt this doctrine if I were to try to do so. My hope, my joy, my very being hinge on my Lord’s substitution. This truth is woven into the warp and woof of my being. Jesus suffered in my stead.

A leader in the religious world tells us that we have not yet obtained a satisfactory theory of the atonement. Let him speak for himself. Thousands of us know what we believe, and know what Jesus did for us. Where has the man lived? What comfort in life and death is there for one who cannot see clearly this first of truths? I thank God I have a definition of the atonement which is to me most clear, sure, and full of comfort. Here it is—“He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” I can live by that, and I can die by that. I am sick to death of the ever-repeated hypocrisy about “theory of the atonement.” I have no theory, for I believe in atonement itself. God keep us steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints, and our consolation will abound.

And yet, once more, there seems to be a deep anxiety on John’s part in the words of my text. He says, “Behold the Lamb of God.” And he does so for the sake of those around him. We do not desire others to believe with us because we need them to keep us in countenance. John was not a man cut out of brown paper, in the same shape as thousands of others, but he was an original, self-contained individual. He knew how to see the Lamb of God for himself, whether other people did or did not see Him.

When I preach to you the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice, it is not because I am unable to believe this truth alone. Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God, what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone. If I am the last man to glory in the substitution of the Lord Jesus, I shall count myself honored to bear His cross alone. But there is great love to his fellows in the heart of every man who has seen the Lord Jesus Christ as bearing sin. That great deed of love makes the beholder feel that he would have all men look and live.

Were you ever half-starved, and did you find bread? Then I know you pitied your famishing brother. Our very instincts lead us to spread the blessing which we have received. Even dogs would do that. A poor dog had his broken leg healed at the hospital, and not many weeks after he brought another lame dog to the same house of mercy. We also long to see men come to Christ, because we have had our broken hearts healed by His tender hand. We love because He first loved us.

Brethren, I was ready to perish under a sense of sin. I was all but damned. I felt the wrath of God surging in my soul like a sea of fire, I found no relief or comfort. Even the Word of God did not cheer me. They told me of believing in Jesus, but till I learned that this Jesus was God’s great appointed sacrifice for sin I saw nothing in Him to cheer me. When I learned that He had borne the penalty and satisfied justice, then I found out the glorious secret, and my conscience was at rest.

Conscience within us reflects, as in a mirror, the facts of the case as God sees them. God causes an awakened conscience to require that which His justice requires. The demand of the conscience is the echo of the demand of the divine government. Conscience requires atonement because the necessity of the case and the nature of God require it. When I learned that there was such an atonement provided, oh, then I rested most sweetly! I wish you all did so.

You that have no atoning sacrifice to plead, how can you bear the weight of your sins? What will you do with them when the death-damp is on your brows? You for whom, according to your own creed, no debt was paid, no penalty endured, how will you answer Justice in her great and terrible day? Believers look to Jesus as discharging all their debt, and they are not afraid of the day of account. But where will you look?

Oh, what will you do? Do not remain without faith in Him who stood in the sinner’s stead. His work is exactly what your mind wants to give it peace. The satisfaction of Jesus will give your mind satisfaction, and nothing else will. Conscience, like the horse-leech, cries, “Give, give,” and it will never cease its cravings till it meets with Christ, whose one full satisfaction will content it forever.

“Behold the Lamb of God.” I shall meet you all in the day of judgment, and I tremble not to do so, for I have told you all the truth of so far as I know it. If you reject the sacrifice for sin, I cannot help it! But I beseech you, receive it and find that the Lamb of God has taken away your sin. Go in peace. The Lord go with you. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 29:38-46; ISAIAH 53; JOHN 1:19-51**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—412, 331, 416

At this time Mr. Spurgeon would remind his friends that his College, Orphanage, and other institutions need to be remembered. Mr. Spurgeon has been laid low by severe pain, and very soon he

must go abroad to rest. It would tend greatly to help his recovery, and enable him to derive full benefit from his holiday, if the coffers of these institutions were at once filled up. Then could the weary sufferer go in peace. Direct, C. H. Spurgeon, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.